

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 are pending. Claims 1, 5, 7 and 9-13 have been amended. Claim 1 is the only independent claim.

Claims 1-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,889,407 (Nucci). Applicants submit that amended claim 1 is patentable over the cited reference for at least the following reasons.

Amended claim 1 is directed to an electrical inspection apparatus including: a reference position regulating member, which is brought into contact with a first surface of a printed board so as to fix the printed board at a reference position with respect to a normal direction; a pressing member, which is brought into contact with a second surface of the printed board opposite to the first surface so as to hold the printed board at the reference position with the reference position regulating member; and at least one inspection probe that is brought into contact with the printed board.

The apparatus is adapted such that the at least one inspection probe may be: (a) brought into contact with the printed board so as to be arranged in a direction of the first surface of the printed board and guided by the reference position regulating member so as to contact with a prescribed position of the first surface of the printed board which differs from a first area in which the reference position regulating member is brought into contact with the printed board, and/or (b) brought into contact with the printed board so as to be arranged in a direction of the second surface of the printed board and guided by the pressing member so as to contact with a prescribed position of the second surface of the printed board which differs from a second area in which the pressing member is brought into contact with the printed board.

Among the salient features of amended claim 1 are that:

(a) a probe is arranged in proximity to the reference position regulating member, and is guided by the reference position regulating member, and is thus brought into contact with the first surface (e.g., the lower surface) of the printed board in an area that is not brought into contact with the reference position regulating member;

(b) a probe is arranged in proximity to the pressing member, and is guided by the pressing member, and is thus brought into contact with the second surface (e.g., the upper surface) of the printed board in an area that is not brought into contact with the pressing member.

The structure defined by Figures 16 and 17 of Nucci is applied against originally filed claim 1. As understood by Applicants, the cited portions of Nucci contain no teaching or suggestion of either of features (a) or (b) mentioned above. For at least this reason, amended claim 1 is believed clearly patentable over Nucci.

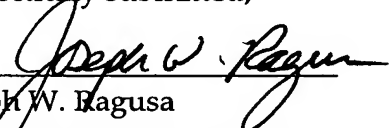
The other claims in this application are each dependent from independent claim 1 discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

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Respectfully submitted,

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